

**A more detailed History of Lotus Elite SERIES II - SUPER 95 - BRISTOL  
BODIED CAR # 1838  
Formerly UK Registration: KOY 961 D**

**Written by John Ralph, the car's second owner**

Motor racing in the 60s was something of a rather glorious period in the sport's history, not only from the driver's point of view but also from the spectator's. As a private entrant, working as a management consultant, I was able to drive at all the major British Circuits. Using a mechanic driving a VW transporter towing the car on a trailer the car could be taken on a tour of the circuits in France, Spain, Italy, Holland and Denmark. Working during the week I then flew out to the circuit for practice and the race, flying back on the Sunday evening or early Monday.

Access to the pit areas, at any of the circuits in the UK and Europe, although controlled, was less formal, with the possible exception of Monaco, where to get into the pits to drive one's car in practice was a bit of a triumph. Entry tickets were affordable and there was an amateurish air of relaxation to which it is difficult to find a parallel within today's approach to the sport.

There is however a glimmer of hope, as anyone who has attended the many Historic Sports Car, and Historic Racing Car events now featured at the major circuits in the UK and also on the some of the major circuits in Europe. The Goodwood Revival meetings annually in September set themselves as the pinnacle of such meetings, and incorporate at that meeting 1940s/50s dress code as a voluntary additional feature, in itself a charming aspect of the meetings.

In 1962 I had put my toe in the water 'so to speak', driving the ubiquitous Mini Cooper in various club, National and International events, to gain experience with some of the main circuits in the UK and to familiarise myself with the general procedures leading up to practice sessions and race days.

I served this apprenticeship, at the often cold open windswept Snetterton, the open straights of the Silverstone circuit, undulations of Brands Hatch and Oulton Park, and the charming Castle Coombe circuit where the sun always seemed to shine.

I had decided to leave the front wheel drive Mini Cooper, and converted to the more conventional rear wheel drive format in GT racing. However, it was not until 1964 that I came across a Lotus Elite for sale which I thought would serve as a suitable stepping stone into GT racing.

This car was to turn out to be a "rather special" Lotus Elite race car. It was built in 1963 as a pure race car (not registered for the road). I enjoyed driving it immensely, it was precise, responsive and extremely quick, with a road holding characteristic which conveyed confidence from the outset.

As events transpired, and time passed, now some forty years later I thought it would be interesting to find out exactly what had become of the car.

I set it down as a matter of curious interest, and as some sort of tribute not only to the Lotus 14 designed by Colin Chapman/ Mike Costin, but also to an exceptional race car designer and builder, the late Derek Bennett of Chevron Cars in Bolton, and to the Australian restorer in Perth, Barry Gray, who restored the car again in 1997 during an eighteen month rebuild programme.

The history of the car, as I know it to be, stems from my purchase of the Lotus Elite in earlier part of 1964, and covers the period shortly before I bought it, during my racing career with it,

and thence shortly after I sold it, and finally to where it has now been traced - in South Australia.

I took the opportunity to go to the RAC Club Library in London, where they have a complete and ongoing collection of motorsport magazines, to check my own racing history - such as it was, and to find what had been written about the car then and since. Autosport was at that time the 'bible' of week to week motor sport events worldwide and which flourished under the editorship of Simon Taylor.

Many people may not be aware that Chevron Formula III and II, Gt., and Can-am Cars became an established force in motor racing in the 60s/70s, and this is now reflected in historic car racing today where Chevrons take many of the first three places. Sadly Derek Bennett lost his life in a flying accident some years ago.

I was given to understand that Derek had earlier been approached by Ford to head up the design team to produce the Ford GT 40, but he decided his future was to be with his own car design and manufacture at his small factory in Bolton, Lancashire. Had he lived on, I have no doubt that Chevron Formula I cars would have been part of the current FI scene.

One of the Autosport magazines (dated 14 March 1969) has a five page article by Ian Titchmarsh specifically relating to Derek Bennett and Chevron Cars to which I now refer.

What has this to do with a Lotus Elite - one may ask. Read on.

In this edition of Autosport, Ian Titchmarsh the motoring journalist interviewed Derek Bennett and wrote up his career as a designer and driver and the origin of Chevron Cars in Bolton.

The provenance and genesis of this particular Lotus Elite Series II, which I bought from Derek, is clearly set down within the article. It was then, and remains, fitted with the Coventry Climax 1220cc engine, certainly the engine I raced the car with was one of Derek's specially prepared engines fitted with two twin choke Weber carburettors.

Titchmarsh wrote, 'By the end of 1961, Derek says, enough money had been scraped together again for the purchase of a Lotus Elite, and two brand new cars were ordered for Alderson and Bennett. Bennett went on to say "Mine was no good. It had a bad body - an essential of the Elite's construction - so I sold it and bought a second-hand one, stripped this and did a complete rebuild."

This one proved very quick, aided by Derek's self-tuned engine, which nevertheless had something of an appetite for crankshafts, and when this car was sold at the end of 1962, the engine and gearbox were retained and fitted into another Elite (the Elite which I bought).

This car became the scourge of the North and won every race it entered in 1963. Derek went on to say, "When the Elans came I realised I was wasting my time," and so the Elite was sold to John Ralph'.

Having tried the car at Oulton Park, I bought the Elite from Derek, and became aware later of its original manufacture in discussion with him. It was based on a series II Bristol body shell with Derek's suspension and running gear modifications. The modifications gave the car a fully adjustable suspension set up. The original colour of the car was red.

Engine # 9587 is currently in the Elite (now refinished in British Racing Green) but this is shown in Ortenburger's first edition of 'Lotus' as originally installed in chassis # 1735.

When I finished racing the car, I registered it for road use in June 1966 - registration number allocated was KOY 951 D - This original UK registration book of the Elite, apparently records an engine # 9608 - Derek Bennett's engine - the one installed in the car when I raced it. (however this is listed as being installed in Elite #1845). The car now holds the chassis plate #1838.

As a race car, it was maintained and entered by a company called Goss Racing (S. Goss) in Buckinghamshire, in return for a small amount of publicity.

I raced the car in 1964/65 with some degree of success. In a total of fourteen races I came first, second or third in all except one. The car didn't feature well at Crystal Palace as the final drive was too long.

In an unrelated opportunity in 1966 I was invited to drive in the 24 hour race at Spa in the Longbacon Engineering Lotus Cortina. I drove the Elite across to Spa Francorchamp in July 1966. It was not an ideal road car, and I ended up with a monumental headache driving through Belgium where the cobbled road surfaces, a feature of the country then, resonated through the car incessantly, due, we found later, to a worn rose joint. At Spa the Lotus Cortina finished in 10th place with myself Nigel and Bill Allen sharing the driving.

I cannot remember the Lotus Elite giving any trouble, either mechanically or from the suspension set up. This is no doubt due, firstly to the way in which it was built by Derek Bennett, and secondly to the due diligence of the mechanic Tim at Goss Racing who always produced the car to the scrutineering bay in immaculate condition. It never put a foot wrong and never missed a beat.

The GT classes had been revised to accommodate the Lotus Elans, and we were usually entered in the up to 1600cc class, as at this time the Elites were being stretched by the more hairy Elans of the day. Practice session prior to the race usually gave me enough time to familiarise myself with the car and track conditions.

On the occasions I gained pole position on the starting grid (one of which was at Silverstone in the Clubmans Championship on the Grand Prix circuit against Elans), it did not seem difficult to achieve. The car was that good! (I never found it necessary to take it on a 'shake down' test session, one didn't seem to do that in those days, although I had tried it at Oulton Park before I actually made the decision to buy it - a decision I never regretted).

I came to know Derek Bennett quite well. In my later motor racing career I elected to buy a Chevron FIII / FII car B15 and B15c. I suppose it was my experience with the Lotus Elite that directed me to Chevron Cars in the first place. I spent some time at the Bolton factory when the cars were being built and had the opportunity to observe at first hand Derek's application to the job in hand - always a very thoughtful application.

Talking with him about the Elite in 1968 he was able to give me some of the detail of his set up of the car, but it was not something I explored fully because by that time I had sold the car, and my thoughts were then on the F III programme.

Production cars coming out of the Lotus factory would usually have been registered for road use in the UK, and identified from day one with a registration number, chassis and engine number, unless of course they were exported. As a race car Derek's did not have had this ID.

Derek was always, in my opinion and in the opinion of many others who knew him, a very straightforward sort of person. I conclude that he set out to construct an Elite that would be more than competitive to beat Team Elite cars.

Lotus were in business to sell cars or kits or body shells. I can confirm my understanding that it was a Super 95 Bristol body shell, on to which he incorporated his much modified Lotus suspension. To which Barry Gray of Perth in Australia would later be testament, as he stripped it down prior to restoration.

Barry said his aim at the time, in purchasing the Elite, was not to race the car but to restore the car for display and historic classic club events and activities, and sealed road competitive rallying. He says it was not until total strip down during the restoration that the extent of the modifications was realised. First examination revealed a 'tired soul'.

The original competition components - ZF close ratio gearbox, 4.55-1 rear differential ratio and ZF limited slip were found to be in perfect condition. Rear suspension is Series II with adjustable rose joint rear trailing arms to the Chapman Strut. Rear Strut shock absorbers Koni with spacers and Series I springs.

Barry set out to restore the car. Being retired and with time and interest on his side, he would take until 9 November 1997 working almost full time on the project before restoration was complete.

He set this down in writing and here in the first section of his very informative notes, after stripping off all the running gear and suspension, he details the task of dealing with a thorough restoration of the monocoque body shell - as follows:-

#### FIBREGLASS BODY SHELL

The paint work top coat and undercoat was stripped off and the original body filler was removed professionally at a sand blasting shop using low pressure bead blast.

The body shell was then examined for structural imperfections by a fibre glass boat building expert friend of Barry's, resulting in gearbox mounting bobbins and damage to the rear tailgate requiring re-fabrication.

All the bobbins and internal steel integrated into the fibreglass construction was examined by cutting V sections to expose the condition of the steel, then grafted and repaired. Any new bobbins were made with extra spikes to hold the overlay fibreglass. A new gearbox mount shaft was machined to original size to suit new bobbins.

A total of 428 hours was spent in preparing the body shell for painting. Barry recalls that under guidance and the supervision of the panel shop he laboured away in a corner and "developed muscles down to the souls of his feet".

The body was prepared with ICI special filler putty in 200mm square sections while the shop tradesmen insisted upon door, hood and boot clearances being 5mm which was most difficult and certainly not Lotus standard of the period.

A paint chemist from ICI UK happened to be at the panel shop and he examined the body and advised on primers, undercoat and finishing coat all of which were supplied by ICI UK. The body had three coats of filler primer, three coats of primer undercoat, three coats of Lotus British Racing Green and three coats of clear. A German brand of underbody preparation used by BMW was added.

Clutch and brake slave cylinders overhauled and new lines to the clutch and brakes renewed, braided lines fitted to all wheel cylinders.

Seats were re-moulded in fibreglass to give comfort and the interior was trimmed in light tan leather on the seats with the remainder in high quality tan coloured vinyl. A special perforated roof lining was used.

Barry Gray was later to describe to me in conversation how he had set the restored body shell on steel trestles on a level flat concrete floor and dropped four plumb lines from the suspension points during assembly to ensure that the whole of the suspension was absolutely square. It matched rather well Derek Bennett's own attention to detail.

The car was fitted with the FWA Coventry Climax 1220cc engine throughout the time that I raced it. I never experienced a crankshaft failure with the engine.

The FWA Coventry Climax engine and ZF gearbox would not exactly have been a problem. They were in abundance in the early sixties and were being increasingly "tweaked" to produce sufficient power for a race winning car.

The same engine was still fitted to the car when I registered it for road use on 8-06-1966 still aspirated by two twin-choke Weber carburettors at that time. Well short of the more powerful 1600cc twin-cam Ford engines used in the Elans; however the handling of the Elite was superb on road and track.

Derek's engineering ability was more than sufficient to know what he wanted in an engine and the state of the art modifications to marry a competitive engine to the running gear throughout.

There were a great number of Coventry Climax FWA/FWB specialists whom he could have elected to prepare the engine and gearbox. However Derek was well able to modify and prepare the engine himself. I recall him pointing out the roller bearing, which had replaced the bush, set into the crankshaft to take the primary shaft, (one of many minor modifications) and which I clearly recall again when the mechanic replaced it with a new unit during a routine check prior to one of the races.

Barry Gray's work on the engine followed his usual practice of a detailed strip and rebuild, checking all components. His notes recorded the process as he later set down here:

#### COVENTRY CLIMAX ENGINE

The 1220cc Coventry Climax engine block and head were crack and pressure tested. The head, though extensively ported and polished in the past, was checked, blueprinted and flow tested. New stellite valve seats for unleaded fuel were fitted.

Valve guides were reamed to fit the latest silicon inserts with interior rifling for oil retention. Valve stem seals were adapted and fixed using a special adhesive (Formula Ford technique).

New double valve spring collets, etc. Head was X-rayed for material flaws and all threads were helicoiled. New head and cam carriage studs were machined out of super grade HT bar.

The five Camshaft bearings were replaced and the competition cam profile checked for wear or damage. The idle shaft bearings were renewed and the steel cam drive gears checked and OK. New endless timing chain supplied locally by Reynolds.

Four new cast liners were fitted and competition rings supplied by Australian Precision Engineers. New high silicon competition pistons supplied by JP Pistons Australia. New little end bushes, conrods sized, polished and crack tested. New 9mm big end bolts fitted.

No clips were used on the piston pins. Teflon buttons were machined to replace gudgeon clips.

The crankshaft though slightly worn was found to be of original specification, it was ground .010in., crack tested and balanced with the lightweight flywheel, and clutch plate combination. A special 8" diaphragm clutch and pressure plate made by REPCO Australia was fitted.

New mains and big end shells fitted. New mains bolts and nuts fitted (no lock tabs). Oil pump gears were replaced in original pump body.

New gaskets fitted throughout. Crankshaft seal was original slip ring type - this was retained and new rings by Precision were fitted.

New water pump bearing and impeller fitted. Shim brass fitted between coolant passage and rear steel backing plate at rear of block.

Oil cooler was pressure tested and checked with new hoses and fittings. Oil cooler has 'a blank' for temperature control in cold weather. All electrics were completely overhauled, as were generator, distributor, starter, wiper motor and regulator.

A new wiring harness was made locally with a multi-fuse box incorporated.

SU Carbs were rebuilt using all original SU parts, competition needles were fitted. Braided wire fuel lines into engine bay. Fuel line from tank to engine bay in alloy tube.

An in line thermostat was fabricated to accommodate additional coolant flow for the Australian climate. The thermostat and bypass maintain a new perfect 85/90 C temperature in any conditions.

The original radiator was stripped and re soldered. Core found to be in perfect condition. A thermostat and manual dash control fan is fitted to front of the radiator.

The skill imparted into the original construction of this car was with the purpose to incorporate, into what was already an acknowledgedly superior road holding car such as the Elite, a more superb road holding car - a rather special Elite. Certainly to be the equal of, and better than, the Team Elite Cars; I don't think Derek would have been satisfied with anything other than that. With his knowledge gained from racing previous Elites and his great ability as a test driver he achieved this objective.

Front suspension of the car is Series I, with the Standard 10 brass threaded trunnions (very rare and only fitted to early Elite competition cars) and Spax adjustable shock absorbers. Roll cage and fire extinguishers fitted. Interior seating and layout for historic racing.

Barry Gray now set about the suspension rebuild in a careful reconstruction based on Derek's original work, again carefully detailing this:

#### FRONT SUSPENSION

Due to the weakness of the mild steel front wishbones, a jig was built and the left and right front wishbones in chrome molloy steel to the exact specs and material size of the originals (welded by a certified air frame welder and X-rayed)

This fabrication had permitted the positive camber to accommodate itself to the negative camber specs used in Team Elite cars. The result speak for itself with perfect balance control.

Barry then found a Standard Ten Australia Post Van in a wreckers yard (side impact) with 2,300 miles on the clock. The brass threaded trunnions and the wishbone threads were as new, these were incorporated into the rebuild.

Left and right side front stub axles and uprights were fitted (ex UK)

Spax shock absorbers were serviced, all new rubber bushes, wheel bearings and brakes rebuilt professionally.

Steering box was overhauled and new steering arms replaced for safety sake. New front torsion bar bushes were fabricated.

Front wishbone pick-up bolt support brackets were designed to add strength to the unsupported bolts protruding from the sub frame.

Throughout restoration ALL bolts were replaced by cad plated high tensile either aircraft or special spec.

Derek was a perfectionist in all aspects of chassis design and car construction. He was in essence a 'hands on man', and I am minded to take the view that Barry Gray in his approach is a man very much after the style of Derek. Having read with great interest the account of

Barry Gray's restoration it serves to reinforce my thoughts as to the similarity of their approaches.

Finally addressing the rear suspension set up of the Lotus, the ZF gearbox, competition wire wheels and petrol tank Barry completes the restoration after almost two years.

#### REAR SUSPENSION

Uprights are Series II Chapman with new Koni shock absorbers. Springs are Series I with spacers. Trailing arms are adjustable rose jointed to a well engineered body support bracket. New rear hub bearing and seals are fitted and all rear universal joints replaced. The differential was rebuilt with new bearings and seals fitted, the crown wheel and pinion being lapped in before assembly. Tail shaft universals were replaced and the tail shaft balanced.

All diff. mounting bushes were replaced and double lock nuts fitted to retaining bolts. A diff. breather was fitted (to avoid breather fumes from fouling the rear brakes) Rear brakes were rebuilt with new brake lines and pads.

The ZF close ratio gearbox was completely overhauled with all new bearings and seals, etc. Gear clusters and synchro shafts, etc., were in very good condition.

The 60 spoke wire wheels were stripped and sand blasted, reassembled and balanced by the local Harley Davidson expert. New Michelin MX tyres were fitted. The Series I hand brake fitted and it works.

The fuel tank was removed and tested. Fuel gauge mechanism checked and rechecked. All chrome, headlight rims, etc., re-chromed.

Barry ends up by writing that maybe there is something I could have forgotten, however in the near two year restoration period everything that needed to be renewed or restored was attended to.

Invoices for the work carried out and parts purchased amounted to £9,000 but this did not include 2,000 hours of labour that Barry put into the work.

I drove the car for the first time in an International race at Goodwood - loved the circuit - came second in the up to 1500cc class behind Wagstaff's Elite. After the race our car was confined to the 'parc ferme' whilst the scrutineers had my mechanic remove the cylinder head to check that the 1220cc engine was 1220cc - it was of course found to be so.

In my ownership from early 1964 to 1967 it was well looked after as a race car, and then as a road car from June 1966.

On 12.04.1967 I sold the car to John Ward, and although it was registered for the road it was still in race trim. By this I mean it had no interior trim. It had a very comfortable bucket seat for the driver and a passenger seat of somewhat flimsy proportions, this perhaps by way of complying with the regulations, for it certainly had no practical purpose as a seat for a passenger. The race exhaust leading from an expansion box emerged just in front of the rear near side wheel.

The original UK log book is now in Australia. In 1968 it was bought by a Mr. Murdoch and then four years later it went to Allan Brownlee who raced the car in the UK. John Webb drove the car for Brownlee in the British Historic Sports Car Championship also known as Autosport UK Championships.

Through the auspices of John Mead, the Secretary of Club Elite I found that the car had made its way to Australia.

I did meet with Alan Brownlee in the 70s during his ownership of the car, in London at the time, and then again subsequently at a race meeting where to my surprise he was racing KOY 961 D in a BRG livery with a yellow stripe.

Comparing it to the condition in which we had kept it, the car was in a poor state. As I recall, it looked then as Barry Gray later described it prior to his restoration "A tired Soul". This is no disrespect to Alan Brownlee, or any of the subsequent owners, it merely looked as though it had done a lot of racing. and needed to be stripped and rebuilt even then.

The foregoing information is submitted as being the history of the car during my acquaintance with it to the best of my knowledge and belief. Of all Lotus Elites, although this car may not have been driven by Les Leston, Jim Clark, Sir John Whitmore, etc., it surely stands on its own merits providing at times scintillating performances for lesser known drivers, and is still standing as a tribute to the man who put it together in the first place, Derek Bennett.

However before it left the UK it was apparently sold to Rogor Thomas an Australian who had it extensively overhauled and reportedly carefully raced the car in the UK between 1980/83 after which in mid 1983 it was shipped to Australia and raced in Historic events throughout Australia. 21 years after it had been built.

Three more owners took possession of the car, one of which, Kevin Shearer raced #1838 in Historic events throughout Australia.

In 1988 the car was sold to Gemtec of Sydney where it was used in promotional events at various race meetings. I may be right to say it is difficult to imagine the car had done more than 40,000 miles in total since it was built by Derek Bennett in Bolton.

In 1991 John Fitzpatrick bought the car. He entered #1838 in the Targa Tasmania Rally. Early in the event he came upon debris on the circuit and crashed with slight damage caused to the offside front fender and offside suspension. The front sub frame was replaced and fibre glass repaired.

This is the only time I have heard of the car being damaged. It was always such a sure footed car.

Andrew Gowan from Melbourne bought the car in December 1992, and he owned it until eventually it was bought by Property Developer, Barry Gray from Perth on 10 March 1996.

Restoration commenced in Perth on 15 April 1996 and over a period of two months the car was stripped back to the bare shell - photographs and a video recorded the stages during the restoration.

It is quite interesting to note that whilst Barry's initial aim was not to race the car, he did. The car appeared to almost have a charisma of its own which appealed to anyone who happened along to own it - it sort of adopted people and imbued in whoever happened to drive it a need to compete, bring out the capabilities of the car and explore their own abilities.

Having traced the car on its journeys throughout the UK and Australia and having had the opportunity to correspond with both Barry Gray and Richard Fewster, I was able to meet with Richard Fewster when he was over in the UK on one of his business trips.

He was kind enough to bring photographs of the car and we talked about the car over lunch in Surrey and later in the year over dinner at The Griffin Inn in Sussex. Much of the work, particularly post Alan Brownlee, has been recorded through invoices and work records.

Throughout the year I had become intrigued by the twists and turns of the car's history the more I uncovered about it, and toyed with the idea of combining a trip to Australia to see my brother with the possibility of re-acquainting myself with the car I had driven in the 60s.

Richard was kind enough to invite me over to Adelaide to have the opportunity to drive the car again. So it was that with this prospect in mind I arranged to spend five weeks with my brother in Queensland for Christmas 2004.

I flew into Perth to meet Barry Gray in Perth for a couple of days in Mid December. Barry and his wife met me at the airport and took me to the hotel on the ocean front. During the two days I was able to recover from the flight and talk about the car with Barry and his experiences with it in racing in Australia. It had notched up an impressive record of success.

In November 1998 #1838 driven by Barry Gray won the up to 1600cc class in the 1,200 km Classic Adelaide Mountain Rally which included 33 closed road special stages. In the following year 1999 again driven by Barry Gray #1838 repeated the win in the Classic Adelaide event.

The car has been entered in Hill Climb, Track and VSCC Club 'Round the Houses' Historic events since restoration and has performed perfectly.

I was very grateful for the time Barry was able to set aside to see me and I have remained in contact with him. He kindly drove me across to the airport to catch the flight to Adelaide.

I arrived in better form in South Australia at Adelaide airport to meet and stay with Richard Fewster for two or three days, and to acquaint myself again with the car.

Richard keeps the car very much as a collectors item in the basement garage of the house and it was there that I was able to set eyes on the car that I had last driven in 1968. It was remarkable to see the transformation - quite extraordinary. The car was as new.

There were of course differences

The car, now fitted with SU Carburettors and an exhaust system that was to original specification and road acceptable, was as impressive as ever with a distinctive but muted crackle from the exhaust system.

The original race exhaust emerging just in front of the nearside rear wheel enabled the car to be set much lower for the race track.

The car now has a fully trimmed interior. The weight of the trim and sound deadening treatment increases the roll factor, but not to the extent of changing the inherent handling characteristics of the car. The rear window and side windows, having been constructed of perspex in the race build have now been replaced by glass and original specification frames.

Richard set aside the day for a short tour of South Australia and after some light hearted banter we set off. It was delightful to be able to familiarise myself with feel of the car in its new guise of road car.

Taking the opportunity to visit one of the Motor Museums near Adelaide to have a look at some of the older cars that were generally in use during the early frontier days of motoring. Distances were so great that the 'Aussie Postie' used a wide variety of vehicle to deliver the post.

The fully trimmed interior was unfamiliar but it gave the car a degree of comfort that one might expect. The trim now exceeds the specification that accompanied the cars from the Lotus production line in the 60s. The instruments now have the original spec rev counter and speed indicator which replace the tachometer with its 'max revs used red' indicator needle used in the race car.

I reminded myself of the driving position, the pedal layout and the start procedure, then realised that pumping the pedal instead of using the choke was not necessary with SU carburettors. The engine fired up and the familiar resonance within the car kicked in the nostalgia. With a weather eye on the speed limits we set off.

I drove with a degree of caution that the car would not have recognised, but that Richard Fewster did. I had looked forward to driving the Elite again with great anticipation and it was nice to renew my acquaintance with the car I had had so much fun with in the 60s.

The car with its basic good looks still attracts a lot of attention from other drivers and pedestrians wherever one happens to be. The design is not dated. It still has the lowest drag coefficient of any production car. Driving through the suburbs of Adelaide gave me time to get used to the car again. The very precise steering and balance of the car brought back many memories.

Stopping for 'tucker' at one of Adelaide's finest restaurants, we met with another former Australian owner of the car, David Inglis, to share impressions of the car. What I found interesting was the fact that almost all the previous owners in Australia had used the car in competition and enjoyed successes with it to a greater or lesser degree.

It took a little bit longer to get into and out of the car than I remembered but I tried not to let it show. The afternoon journey took us out into the bush - well almost - where the engine was happier, the straights longer and the road holding of the car starts to do what it was designed to do. As far as I am aware there were no speeding tickets.

It had been eighteen months since I had first embarked on the hunt for "KOY 961 D". I had never been sure from the outset if it still existed. My thanks must go to John Mead, Secretary of Club Elite for his initial input; to Barry Gray in Perth for his co-operation and hospitality, and to Richard Fewster in Adelaide for the time he generously set aside for my stay there and for his enthusiastic help.

The Lotus currently sits, very well cared for, in Renmark, South Australia, as part of a small Historic Car display attached to the Ruston's Roses, run by the family, now a highly regarded rose growing enterprise originally started in 1924, now holding 50,000 rose bushes of more than 4,000 varieties making the collection one of the most important in the world.

It would be rather nice to see the car racing in the UK again. Richard Fewster has kindly noted my interest and request for first refusal if the car comes up for sale. I am saving up for more premium bonds - who knows what may yet occur. Stranger things have happened.

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John E. Ralph

with acknowledgements to Barry Gray

Richard Fewster

John Mead, Club Elite